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TAGS: PREL PGOV SNAR ELAB VE

SUBJECT: CHAVISTA NA DEPUTY ON PSUV FORMATION AND COCA-COLA
LABOR DISPUTE

REF: CARACAS 000109

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR DANIEL LAWTON,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) National Assembly Deputy Francisco Torrealba told Poloff March 13 that much work still needs to be done in President Chavez's new United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Torrealba said the party still needed to:

-- determine how to select candidates;

-- revise party statutes; and,

-- elect regional party representatives.

Torrealba joked that the current PSUV statutes drafted by PSUV Founding Congress "give all power to the soviets." He speculated that the PSUV is unlikely to cede many viable candidate slots for the November state and local elections to coalition partners, Patria Para Todos (PPT) and the Communist Party (PCV).

¶2. (C) Torrealba expressed surprise that powerful Miranda Governor Diosdado Cabello was not among the 15 PSUV leaders elected to the party's steering committee. He also remarked that none of the persons who defected from Podemos to the PSUV made the cut. Torrealba noted that the winners generally played prominent roles on the pro-government airwaves. He also expressed concern that certain PSUV steering committee members, including VTV journalists Vanessa Davies and Mario Silva, were fundamentally opposed to political parties and ill-suited to the task of building the PSUV.

¶3. (C) Reflecting on his role as the government mediator in the ongoing dispute between Mexican-owned FEMSA Coca-Cola and former workers demanding severance pay (Ref B), Torrealba said FEMSA Coca-Cola is offering some compensation to the former workers even though the workers pressed their claim after the legal deadline. Torrealba said he hoped the former workers would accept the severance offer, but did not rule out renewed efforts by some to shut down the company's bottling and distribution centers instead. In that event, Torrealba said the Venezuelan government had a responsibility to intervene to allow FEMSA Coca-Cola to continue to do business.

DUDDY